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Testimony 2/17/2015 Public Hearing

Re: Bill 158, An Act Concerning Landscape Architecture Licenses

By: Thomas R Tavella, PLA, FASLA,

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Past National President of the American Society of Landscape Architects; Past National Vice President of Communications, American Society of Landscape Architects; Fellow, American Society of Landscape Architects; Past Trustee of the Connecticut Chapter ASLA; Past President of the Connecticut Chapter ASLA.

On behalf of the many licensed Landscape Architects in Connecticut, including myself, I want to express my very strong opposition to Proposed Bill 158, An Act Concerning Landscape Architect Licenses, which is currently under consideration by the General Law Committee of the General Assembly.

From its inception in the late 1960s and continuing to today, the current statute pertaining to landscape architects, Section 20-370 of the Connecticut General Statutes, has required an individual wishing to become licensed as a landscape architect in Connecticut to have a degree in landscape architecture, and to have two years of professional experience, and to pass a national examination. Section 20-370, as amended, provides an exception for the Connecticut Board of Landscape Architects to allow an individual who does not have the formal educational requirement but does have eight years of practical experience, under the direction of a licensed landscape architect, to take the national examination prior to being issued a license.

The current law was very carefully crafted with our national organizations The American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA), the Council of Landscape Architect Registration Board (CLARB), and the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board (LAAB) that all 50 states, Puerto Rico and all the provinces in Canada have adopted and adhere to.

Landscape Architecture, like similar professions such as engineering, architecture, surveying, all require the passing of rigorous examination as a prerequisite for obtaining a professional license.

The principle of requiring education, experience and examination as the basis for licensing of all design professions is fundamental to the protection of the public health, safety and welfare. .

- Education. Connecticut requires a candidate for licensing to have a degree in landscape architecture from a college that is accredited by the Landscape Architecture Accreditation Board

(LAAB). All states adhere to this basic requirement. As noted above, Connecticut (but not all states) may waive this requirement for those rare individuals who may not have a degree but have eight years of experience. This exception has been incorporated into Section 20-370 since its inception.

- Experience. Connecticut requires a candidate to have two years of practical experience under the direction of a landscape architect. For those who may not have a college degree, the board requires eight years of experience as noted above. In contrast to many other states, the Connecticut Board of Landscape Architects may consider practice under the direction of an architect or professional engineer as meeting the experience requirement pursuant to RCSA Section 20-368-8a.
- Examination. The purpose of requiring an examination of all candidates is to be sure that an individual is minimally competent to practice landscape architecture without peer review so as not to jeopardize the public health, safety and welfare. Consistent with all other states, Connecticut requires that all candidates pass the national Landscape Architects Registration Examination (LARE), similar to the examinations for engineering and architecture. The LARE is based on a professionally conducted job analysis undertaken by the Council of Landscape Architecture Registration Boards (CLARB) of which Connecticut has been an active member since 1970. The job analysis is undertaken every five to seven years to identify those elements of landscape architecture practice that need to be examined and to incorporate those elements into a universally accepted examination. The LARE is comprehensive in its scope in order to allow the successful candidate to demonstrate that his/her education and experience is sufficient to protect the public health, safety and welfare.

To rely solely on a candidate's education and experience without having a comprehensive examination would adversely affect the consumers in Connecticut. There is no way to fairly evaluate that the education received at the collegiate level covers the depth of practice of landscape architecture. Mere accreditation is not equivalent to examination. Similarly, there is no way to assure the consistency of practical experience because the practice in one professional or governmental office can vary from another office. The comprehensive LARE is the only way to evaluate the combined sufficiency of educational and professional experience of candidates for licensure.

There is another practical problem with eliminating the examination requirement for the practice of landscape architecture. At present, because Connecticut has essentially the same education, experience and examination requirements as other states, the Connecticut licensees are able to practice in all other states by simply obtaining a license in that state under the principle of reciprocity. Were the examination requirement to be eliminated, Connecticut's law would no longer be considered to be equivalent and the licensee would be unable to practice in other jurisdictions without taking the LARE. Simply, the Connecticut licensee who did not pass the LARE could not cross into surrounding states to practice. However, licensees from other states could practice in Connecticut because the requirements in other states would exceed those of Connecticut.

In the over 45 years since the enabling legislation for licensing landscape architects was adopted by the General Assembly, no one has ever suggested that an examination is not an essential component of professional licensing. Therefore there is absolutely no justification whatsoever for altering, and

therefore undermining, the current sound licensing procedure of landscape architects in Connecticut. Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

I have a practice based in Connecticut as well as 26 other states and one office in Canada. My practice requires me to be licensed in multiple states. I am currently licensed in MA, RI, CT, NY, NC & AR and currently seeking reciprocity in several other states. If this bill is passed you will be jeopardizing my ability to get licensed in any other states, and my practice.

The current, well-functioning regulations do not need changing at all. Therefore I strongly urge you to do whatever you can to have the General Law Committee not move forward with this Proposed Bill 158.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.